

DEADWEIGHT CATTLE TRADE

NI FACTORY BASE QUOTES FOR CATTLE

(P/KG DW)	This Week 01/04/24	Next Week 08/04/24
Prime		
U-3	454 - 460p	454 - 460p
R-3	448 - 454p	448 - 454p
O+3	442 - 448p	442 - 448p
P+3	386 - 392p	386 - 392p
Cows		
O+3	322 - 340p	322 - 340p

Cow quotes vary depending on weight and grade.
Pricing policies vary from plant to plant. Producers are advised to check pricing policies before presenting cattle for slaughter.

REPORTED NI CATTLE PRICES - P/KG

W/E 30/03/24	Steers	Heifers	Young Bulls
U3	482.5	481.0	469.6
R3	476.3	477.9	465.6
O+3	468.8	471.3	450.4

*Prices exclude AA, HER, WAG and Organic cattle

REPORTED COW PRICES NI - P/KG

W/E 30/03/24	Weight Bands			
	<220kg	220-250kg	250-280kg	>280kg
P1	217.6	235.6	248.5	260.1
P2	251.1	271.4	293.9	309.0
P3	283.8	283.7	305.3	318.5
O3	-	319.4	333.3	336.2
O4	-	-	330.9	340.3
R3	-	-	-	356.7

Deadweight Cattle Trade

Last week in NI the deadweight cattle trade reported an overall strengthening on the previous week. Steers were the only category to report an overall decline back 1.3p/kg to an average price of 470.2p/kg. The average price paid for an R3 steer last week was 478.8p/kg. The average R3 heifer price was up 3.7p/kg to 481.1p/kg, with the overall heifer price up 2.2p/kg to 472.5p/kg. The average price paid for an R3 young bull was up 3.8p/kg to an average price of 465.4p/kg while the grades within the category were mixed which saw the average young bulls price increase by a marginal 0.1p/kg to 453.9p/kg. The cow trade in NI strengthened last week with the average cow price up 3.2p/kg to 302.3p/kg.

Last week in GB the deadweight trade for all types of steers and heifers declined across all regions. R3 steers were back 3.4p/kg to 495.6p/kg with declines for R3 steers ranging from 2.1p/kg in the Midlands and Wales to 5.9p/kg in Scotland. Significant declines across all regions brought the average steer price back 2.7p/kg to 489.9p/kg. R3 heifers were back 1.6p/kg to 494.7p/kg with the average price paid for heifers back 2p/kg to 486.3p/kg. The differential between NI and GB narrowed by 1.9p/kg last week with the NI R3 steer price now 16.8p/kg behind the same price in GB.

In ROI tighter supplies of cattle for slaughter strengthened the deadweight trade in both euro and sterling terms for the fourth consecutive week. The differential on an R3 steer between NI and ROI has narrowed 9.4p/kg over the past four week period to a differential of 31.8p/kg last week. Meanwhile, the deadweight trade for cows in ROI remains well ahead of NI with the O3 cow price differential increasing to 28.6p/kg last week.

LAST WEEK'S DEADWEIGHT CATTLE PRICES (UK / ROI)

W/E 30/03/24	Northern Ireland	Rep of Ireland	Scotland	Northern England	Midlands & Wales	Southern England	GB
Steers	U3	481.8	454.7	498.5	500.9	498.9	497.8
	R3	478.8	447.0	498.1	498.7	495.8	490.6
	R4	476.1	448.4	495.4	501.3	492.2	491.8
	O3	469.1	439.0	486.7	482.6	482.6	474.7
AVG	470.2	-	494.4	493.9	487.1	482.7	489.9
Heifers	U3	482.8	463.3	503.8	505.1	503.5	498.8
	R3	481.1	451.7	496.9	499.3	494.8	489.5
	R4	477.0	454.4	496.3	502.8	494.4	490.3
	O3	466.3	445.2	469.7	473.8	477.8	468.6
AVG	472.5	-	493.7	492.0	483.6	475.5	486.3
Young Bulls	U3	468.4	444.1	488.8	484.0	491.9	501.6
	R3	465.4	436.2	483.2	479.3	485.5	471.6
	O3	452.3	424.5	463.2	456.2	462.2	470.7
	AVG	453.9	-	481.0	466.2	468.5	460.5
Prime Cattle Price Reported	4,961	-	5,995	5,966	7,393	4,670	24,024
Cows	O3	335.7	364.3	380.0	375.6	382.1	374.9
	O4	339.9	362.4	382.6	378.0	382.9	375.0
	P2	296.5	329.4	331.2	335.1	333.1	332.5
	P3	314.7	346.1	355.5	356.7	354.5	350.5
AVG	302.3	-	376.1	354.6	353.2	339.1	352.7

Notes: (i) Prices are p/kg Sterling-ROI prices converted at 1 euro=85.71p Stg
(ii) Shading indicates a lower price than the previous week.
(iii) AVG is the average of all grades in the category, not just those listed

FQAS MART CLINICS APRIL 2024

LMC Farm Liaison Officer, Terry White, runs Farm Quality Assurance Scheme (FQAS) advice sessions at a range of Livestock Marts across Northern Ireland. Terry is present to assist members of FQAS with non-conformances, general scheme queries and any issues prior to or following an inspection.



Any farmers who wish to join the scheme can also do so through their local FQAS mart clinic. Terry will be available at the livestock marts listed in the table below.

For further information call (028) 9263 3024.

Mart	Date
Markethill	Tuesday 9th April
Omagh	Monday 15th April
Ballymena	Friday 19th Ballymena

DEADWEIGHT SHEEP TRADE

NI SHEEP BASE QUOTES

(P/Kg DW)	This Week 01/04/24	Next Week 08/04/24
R3 Hoggets up to 22kg	690p	700p
R3 Hoggets up to 22.5kg	680p	700 - 710p

REPORTED NI SHEEP PRICES

(P/KG)	W/E 16/03/24	W/E 23/03/24	W/E 30/03/24
D/W R3 Hoggets	692.4	726.7	723.1
D/W Hoggets	697.0	727.2	Not currently available
L/W Hoggets	620.8	619.4	Not currently available
D/W R3 Spring Lambs	-	834.7	808.3
D/W Spring Lambs	-	807.5	Not currently available
L/W Spring Lambs	-	746.1	Not currently available

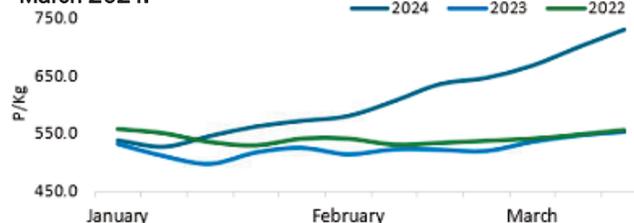
REGIONAL SHEEP PRICES (GB / ROI)

GB D/W Hoggets	789.8	838.8	816.3
ROI D/W Hoggets	696.2	722.8	738.1

Sheep Trade

Last week the deadweight trade locally for R3 hoggets was back 3.6p/kg to 723.1p/kg on average. The average price paid for R3 spring lambs was back by 26.4p/kg on the previous week to 808.3p/kg with more spring lambs coming onto the market. During the same week last year, the price paid for an R3 grade hogget in NI was 564.4p/kg with lambs not yet being reported. The trade for hoggets in GB declined last week however the hogget trade in ROI strengthened by the equivalent of 15.3p/kg to 738.1p/kg. Smaller numbers of sheep passed through local marts this week due to the Easter holidays at the beginning of the week, while the trade remained relatively steady on the previous week with reports of good quality hoggets/lambs available.

Deadweight hogget/lamb price NI January 2022 - w/e 23 March 2024.



INFORMATION EVENTS

BEEF CARBON REDUCTION SCHEME

A series of BCR scheme information meetings have been organised by the CAFRE Knowledge Advisory Service to make farmers aware of the details of the scheme, the eligibility criteria and how to apply.

TUESDAY 09 APRIL
7.30PM
CAFRE Enniskillen campus

WEDNESDAY 10 APRIL
7.30PM
Mourne Country Hotel, Newry

THURSDAY 11 APRIL
7.30PM
The Lodge Hotel, Coleraine

WEDNESDAY 17 APRIL
7.30PM
Armagh City Hotel, Armagh

BOOK YOUR PLACE NOW
VISIT THE CAFRE WEBSITE

DIRECT LINK:
TINYURL.COM/9U5K7MJF



LIVEWEIGHT SHEEP TRADE

LATEST SHEEP MARTS (P/KG LW)

From: 30/03/24		Hoggets				Spring Lambs			
		No	From	To	Avg	No	From	To	Avg
Tuesday	Saintfield	540	640	740	-	-	-	-	-
	Rathfriland	519	631	720	643	40	700	778	733
Wednesday	Ballymena	907	620	871	655	74	733	731	780
	Enniskillen	405	630	740	-	-	-	-	-
	Armoey	403	685	753	-	-	-	-	-

BEEF AND LAMB PRICES FORECAST TO REMAIN AT HISTORICALLY HIGH LEVELS OVER THE COMING MONTHS

A recent 'Spring Conference' supported by the Livestock and Meat Commission for Northern Ireland (LMC), and hosted by the Andersons' Centre and the Irish Farmers' Journal has confirmed the current strength of beef and lamb prices.

Andersons partner and senior research consultant, Michael Haverty, reflected on the main themes discussed at the event. "Sheep prices are particularly strong at the present time," he explained.

"Religious festivals, including Eid, Ramadan and Easter, have a very significant influence on the sheep meat market. "The Muslim community now account for 6.5 per cent of the UK's population. This figure translates into 20 per cent of total sheep meat consumption. Haverty touched upon the seasonal price pattern within the UK sheep sector and price trends over recent years.

In 2023, markets started slowly as there was a large carry-over of hoggets. However, as 2023 progressed prices rose due to lower supply and in the latter stages of the year, this was partly linked to wet weather delaying the finishing times of lambs.

For 2024, hogget/lamb supplies look set to remain relatively tight across the UK. Despite profitability challenges within the UK sheep sector having brought about a reduction in overall numbers over recent years, productivity improvements have been achieved by the sector. Haverty pointed out that production of UK sheep meat, in tonnage terms, has remained relatively constant over the past two decades, with annual changes in the region of 2-3 per cent recorded for most years.

Meanwhile Haverty advised there are some indications that in Australia, there might be fewer lambs available in the latter part of the year. Given Australia's importance in global lamb trade, this would support UK lamb prices and projections suggest that prices would be at the upper end of the historical 5-year range.

Looking ahead, The Andersons Centre consultant believes that reduced supply should help to uphold prices although there will be increased competition from Australia and New Zealand in higher value cuts, including legs of lamb. This could signify a greater exportable surplus to the EU in the years ahead.

Turning to beef, The Andersons Centre representative indicated that prices should remain at historically high levels over the coming 12 months. A key driver in this context is the anticipated reduction in supplies from both the UK and Irish cattle sectors throughout this period.

The UK beef market has risen significantly since 2021. According to the latest Andersons analysis, the outlook for 2024 remains relatively strong as supplies from Ireland are forecast to be lower and demand for key cuts, including roasting joints, remains strong. Michael Haverty again: "However, the amount of beef that could be potentially imported from Australia and New Zealand by way of Tariff Rate Quotas are increasing and overall demand is projected to stagnate. "Therefore, some weakening of prices is projected towards year-end, although these values are forecast to remain above the historical average."

"Cattle from the dairy herd will become an increasingly important factor within the beef industry's future production and processing models. "Specifically, where milk is concerned, farm gate prices have started to strengthen again after a very challenging 12 months. "However, it's unlikely they will reach the historic highs recorded during the second half of 2022."

Image 1: Representatives at the event held in the Glenavon Hotel Cookstown. From left to right: Colin Smith (LMC CEO), Michael Haverty (Andersons Centre Consultant and speaker at the event), David Wright (IFJ NI editor) and David Torrens (LMC board member).



Price only part of the profitability equation

Producer prices are only part of the equation, when it comes to determining the overall profitability of farming businesses. "The price of all inputs, labour costs and inflation are still running at relatively high levels," Haverty commented. "These are key factors that must be included within any assessment of future sustainability with the beef, sheep and other sectors of farming."

Michael Haverty also pointed out that all the regions of the UK are now seeking significantly enhanced farm support budgets. The current measures will remain in place until the end of the current Westminster parliamentary term. So, in reality, new funding arrangements should be in place by 2025. Driving this campaign is a recognition that inflation at current levels will eat-in to the value of future support budgets in a relatively short period of time. And the only way to counter this is to secure an enhanced funding arrangement from government at this stage.

Michael Haverty again:

"The government may well agree some increase in farm funding across all the regions of the UK. But whether this will be in anyway close to the increases already called for by the various farming organisations is extremely difficult to predict at this stage. "The reality is that agriculture will be vying with the likes of health and education for the levels of Exchequer funding that will be made available in 2025 and beyond."

As part of its ongoing commitment to UK agriculture, The Andersons Centre regularly updates the performance and profitability related figures centred on a typical beef and sheep enterprise (Meadow Farm) model for each of the four regions: England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

In the case of Northern Ireland, the envisaged lowland enterprise comprises 60ha of land: 52ha owned and 8ha rented. Suckler cows, the finishing of male calves as bulls and sheep make up the enterprises within the business. According to the latest Andersons' figures, recent years have been very challenging for this farm with some substantial losses from production, particularly in 2022/23 when many key variable costs (notably feed and fertiliser) peaked. Whilst 2023/24 has improved somewhat as prices have been higher and cost pressures have eased, the farm still generates a significant loss from production (£285/ha). Significantly, it is only when the support payments are added, does the farm generate a surplus. However, it should be noted that across all years, there are

drawings of £20,000 which are included in the costs. The coming year looks challenging as output prices are forecast to ease. Whilst the farm is also attempting to cut down on variable costs, a production loss of £394/ha is projected.

An LMC perspective on the Outlook Conference

LMC Chief Executive, Colin Smith, believes that geo-political factors will continue to play a key role in global prices with elections due in the UK and the US late this year. He further explained: "We have seen how global conflicts can cause shocks to the market. "Trade deals will bring challenge and opportunity. So a close eye will be kept on the impact of the Australia and New Zealand deals as liberalisation increases in years to come. But Colin Smith also recognises that geo-political issues and trade deals are largely outside of farmers' control.

"The importance of direct support remains clear given that beef and sheep production returns constitute the smallest margins generated within all the agri-sectors. "Without direct support, the majority of beef and sheep farms in Northern Ireland would be in a loss making position."

The LMC's Chief Executive went on to point out that farm policy focus across the UK has changed to that of securing environmental targets. "Whilst this change in policy focus can be frustrating for some, coupled livestock schemes focus on increasing productivity," he said.

"Increased productivity should result in better margins and reduced carbon footprints. This adds up to a win:win scenario for the agri food economy and the environment." He continued: Northern Ireland's cost of production is high. As a result, our beef and lamb producers must have access to the highest paying markets in the world. "We are well placed to supply these markets given the high standards we pride ourselves on.

Looking ahead, Colin Smith notes The Andersons Centre projection, to the effect that beef consumption looks set to be static or, at best, slow across the traditional markets of the UK and the European Union (EU).

"Spreading risk by accessing new markets will be important and the new IGFB PGI is a positive outcome in this regard. "Andersons commentators suggest a need to explore high quality niche markets, such as Japan and South Korea," he added. "It would seem that the rate of change for farmers could be the biggest challenge over the next five years," he commented. "As a result, opportunities will be generated for those in a position to grasp them." The LMC representative continued: "UK food security has been good over recent times. However, Covid has shown us that matters can change quickly."

In conclusion

Looking ahead LMC's Chief Executive points out that a rising global population will need fed. He, therefore, recognises that whilst farm support policy currently has a strong focus on environmental targets, increased productivity will be key going forward.

Colin Smith concluded: Meeting environmental targets will, from a livestock perspective, require increased productivity. This approach will, in turn, deliver increased margins at farm level.

"Support schemes are there to assist farmers in this transition and therefore if farmers can harness any support that is offered to them this should help manage their business through this period and be ready for the opportunities that lie ahead."



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